

# NetworkNEWS Flash!

Illinois Department on Aging

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich  
Director Charles D. Johnson

December 5, 2003

## **New rules, funds for nursing home advocates**

The Ombudsman Program that advocates for Illinois residents who live in long-term care facilities, is growing stronger. The muscle comes from new funding to expand services and the approval of new standards that will comply with federal mandates and set a policy of uniform policies and procedures across the state. Both the funding and the uniform rules began Dec. 1.

### **Services to nursing home residents and their families will be expanded**

"Nursing home ombudsmen are my heroes," said Charles D. Johnson, director of the Illinois Department on Aging that sponsors the Ombudsman Program. "The ombudsmen represent all of us when they reach out to residents in nursing homes to strengthen their bonds with the community and to help residents assert their civil and human rights."

The state department oversees the ombudsman program through 17 regional programs that use about 500 volunteers in long-term care facilities throughout the state. Individual ombudsmen are trained and supervised by professionals from 17 regional Long Term Care Ombudsman Programs throughout the state.

The ombudsmen invite concerns from residents and their families and work to resolve those problems, which range from cold food or a missing sweater, to more serious issues such as a resident's right to decline medical treatment or abuse, Johnson said.

Services to nursing home residents and their families will be expanded with a \$750,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health. The services will include the formation of family councils, promotion of family and community involvement, the resolution of resident concerns and assistance with a long-term care survey program conducted by Public Health.

The new long-term care ombudsman standards were finalized after a public review period of more than a year.

For information about these and other programs for older people and their families, call the Department on Aging HelpLine, 1-800-252-8966 (Voice and TTY).

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